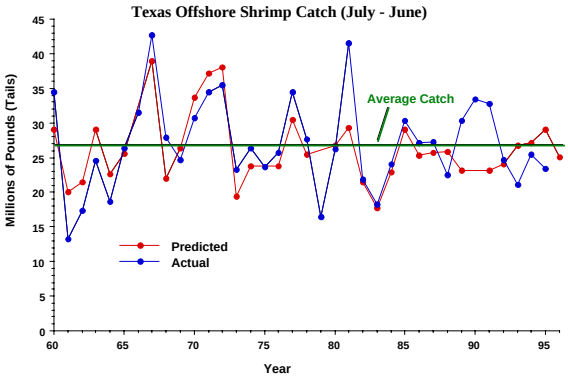
The NOAA National Marine Fisheries Galveston Laboratory provides scientific information for the management of commercial and recreational shellfish and finfish, conservation of coastal habitats, and protection of threatened and endangered species of the Gulf of Mexico. Fishery programs monitor commercial and recreational fishery yields and investigate reproduction, growth, survival, feeding, habitats, and migrations of shrimp, crab, and fish species. Protected species research is devoted to similar ecological studies on sea turtles in addition to investigations on physiology, behavior, strandings, and rehabilitation.

The Galveston Laboratory began in 1929 as a Bureau of Commercial Fisheries facility to study oysters. The present laboratory was established in 1950 on the site of the U.S. Army's Fort Crockett. The laboratory has 70 employees, occupies more than 55,000 square feet of research space, and has an annual budget of 3 million dollars. A 90,000 gallon flow-through seawater system supplies aquaria and raceways for research on marine animals. Laboratory staff conduct cooperative research and educational programs with Texas A&M University, the University of Texas, the University of Southwestern Louisiana, Louisiana State University, and Bradley University of Peoria, IL. These programs provide scientific and technical information for management of commercial and recreational fisheries, essential fisheries habitats, and protected species in the Gulf of Mexico, U.S. Atlantic, and Caribbean. Research at the laboratory has been supported by the Department of Energy, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Minerals Management Service, and the Environmental Protection Agency through cooperative interagency agreements to study human effects on living marine resources. The laboratory's research staff also extends their expertise through teaching and advising undergraduate and graduate students. Numerous Master and Doctoral degrees have been earned under the guidance of staff scientists.



Since 1960, information on shrimp fishery landings in the Gulf of Mexico has been collected by port agents and stored at the Galveston Laboratory. Data on the number of vessel**s**, hours fished, and pounds of shrimp landed is used to manage the shrimp fishery in cooperation with the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council and the Gulf coast states. The laboratory issues annual forecasts of brown shrimp yields in the western Gulf of Mexico. Since 1960, the laboratory's predicted yield of brown shrimp has been within three percent of the actual catch. Such information allows the fishing industry to prepare their fishing operations for good, bad, or average years. The laboratory also monitors the pink shrimp fishery in Florida. Yields of pink shrimp are forecast using landings data, weather data and hydrologic information from Everglades National Park. The linkage between declining pink shrimp landings and the die-off of Florida Bay seagrasses is being studied.